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1.—*Report on some Inscriptions found at Hammam, on the Southern Coast of Arabia, 1835. By Messrs. T. G. HUTTON, Asst. Surgeon, and Lieut. J. SMITH, of the Palinurus Surveying Vessel.*

[Communicated to the Asiatic Society by the Government of Bombay. See Proceedings, 2nd Sept.]

*March 14th, 1835.*—The accompanying inscriptions were found in the neighbourhood of *Dis*, a Bedouin town, a few hours distance from *Ras Sharma*, on the southern coast of Arabia.

The natives who came off to the ship represented it as a populous, well-cultivated district, abounding in vegetables and fruits of various descriptions. Having learned from these persons that there were a number of ancient buildings, and some writing in a character unknown to the Arabs, we naturally felt an inclination to make a personal inspection of them; and to effect this with security, Captain HAINES sent our pilot, a native of the place, on shore, to request the Ruling Sheikh to grant us his firman, and a few Bedouin attendants. In reply, a letter was sent off, making a most exorbitant demand of money, rice, copper, and sundry other very useful articles, specifying the individual quantities with much nicety and precision, as a price of his protection. This of course was politely declined; and from a subsequent conversation with some of the party themselves, they appeared not only to regret the exercise of their cupidity, which had deprived them of at least a few presents from the ship, but seemed to be sensibly ashamed of a conduct so much at variance with the hospitable treatment we had universally met with since leaving Maculla.

We left *Sharma* without remarking any thing further than the remains of two water tanks, much resembling in form and structure, those we saw on the summit of *Hasan Ghoráb*. There appeared also to have been a fort and a small town on the point of the cape ; but time had been so active in her work of destruction, that the traces merely were visible. At *Gossyrh*, we were more fortunate, and although the distance was greatly increased, it was deemed desirable to obtain some correct information of a part of the country, which in all human probability may never be visited again under such favourable circumstances, and which promised to prove so interesting in an antiquarian point of view. With the permission of Captain HAINES, Mr. SMITH and myself started from *Gossyrh*, and after a tedious journey of about 15 miles, through a flat, barren country, we halted for the night about 10 P. M. under the ruins of a very old fort. Here we slept, and the following morning commenced our researches. The Bedouins, who attended us, unfortunately knew nothing of either the ruins or the writing ; but having recalled to our recollection the name of a Bedouin, who had been on board for medical assistance at *Sharma*, we inquired for his residence, which he had informed us was in the neighbourhood, and found him exceeding civil and obliging in showing us every thing he considered might be of interest to us. Like all his Arab brethren, he knew nothing but what his own external senses had taught him : and in common with them, he adopted the easy method of accounting for forts, tanks, inscriptions, &c. by ascribing them all to the superior genius of the Feringís, of whom they seem to have entertained a kind of superstitious dread : of course little else than the names of the places could be procured. The fort is called *Hasan el Meimelí*, and from its size, the nature of the materials of which it is composed, and its form, appears never to have been remarkable for its strength or stability. It is now completely in ruins. After traversing great part of the neighbouring country, which is known by the name of Hammam, we at last came to *Jibul Aaledma*, where we were directed to look for the inscriptions.

About half way up the hill, which we estimated about 200 feet, we came to a spacious cave, on the sides of which, wherever a smooth surface presented itself, we discovered the traces of writing. Most of it was executed in a species of red paint, but in one or two parts, a black composition had been made use of ; by the ravages of time, many of them were nearly obliterated ; but in others, by wetting the surface, and removing the dust which had accumulated, the characters became much more legible, and in one part in particular, the colour became quite brilliant, looking as fresh as though it had been just laid on.

Having discovered and copied those very perfect inscriptions of *Hasan Ghoráb*, we were at once struck with the resemblance they bore to these now before us, and on a more minute comparison, the letters will be found generally to correspond, although there are a few here, which do not present themselves in the former. As it would appear, that the style of writing is now extinct, at least entirely so in this part of Arabia, it becomes a pleasing subject of speculation by what persons they could have been executed. The characters certainly bear a stronger assimilation to the Ethiopic than to any other known in the present day; and consulting the history of Arabia, we find, that prior to the Persian conquest of *Yemen*, under *NOUSHIRVAN*, the whole of that fertile province was under the sway of the Abyssinians, many of whom having become enamoured of its beauties, permanently settled here. I think such are fair grounds for assuming that these are the remains of that people, especially as we know them to have been an enterprising commercial nation, with talent and qualifications, which fitted them for such design as *Hasan Ghoráb*, from the execution of which the native inhabitants would have shrunk with despair. For a solution of these difficult questions, however, it will be more becoming in us to preserve silence, and leave them to the disposal of persons better qualified by their peculiar studies and more extended information on such points. I may here mention the coincidence of the name *Hasan Ghoráb*, and *Bait Ghoráb*, the fort and house of *Ghoráb*, which latter is one of the most populous and powerful tribes in the neighbourhood of *Hammam*. On questioning one of the tribes concerning the origin of his title, he told us, his ancestors came from *Hasan Ghoráb*, a place, however, only known to him by hearsay. There are now many intermediate tribes between the two places, so that should the information be correct, we may infer that this is merely a branch of the family drawn here by the comparatively fertile nature of the soil over that about *Hasan Ghoráb*.

With respect to the general features of the country about *Hammam*, it wears a most unpromising aspect, there being to all appearance nothing but barren hills; but on entering the ravines and valleys, the scene becomes suddenly changed, and the eye is once more gratified by the visible marks of cultivation and the industry of man. In each corner of the valley may be seen a thriving date grove, and sometimes pretty large portions of grounds, covered with *Taam*, onions, garlic, sweet potatoes, and a variety of melons and pompions, one species of which is called the "Bortagal," for what reason it would not appear very evident. The *Nebek* and cocoanut thrive well. After searching about for further curiosities, we left *Hammam* about noon, and instead of

returning direct to *Gossyrh*, we chose a path nearer to the distant range of *Assad*, and after much fatigue, and some little risk, we arrived at the old fort of *Maaba*, about 12 o'clock at night. We were led to make this deviation in consequence of the character we received of the fort from the natives, who informed us, it was composed entirely of hewn stone, and in a high state of preservation; a distant hope too of finding further inscriptions prompted us to visit the place.

In our search for inscriptions, we were disappointed, neither could we learn from the people about, that there existed any. This, however, should not damp a person's ardour in quest of antiquities, as many of the Arabs positively cannot recognize writing when they see it, if it differ at all from the modern Arabic. We saw an instance of this at *Hammam*; having accidentally found a few characters engraved on a stone on the road side, we immediately stopped to take a copy, while the Bedouins anxiously inquired, "why we were writing the stone," as they simply expressed it; and on being informed that we were copying the writing upon the stone, they seemed half incredulous about it. A short time after this, one of them took me to look at a stone on which he said there was some writing; it proved, however, to be nothing but some natural marks on the surface of the rock, and when I told him this, he laughed, and candidly told me he knew no better.

The fort of *Maaba*, to all appearance, has been strong and well constructed, of stones and mortar; though the former are not hewn, as we were informed they were. There are no embrasures for guns, but numerous loop-holes for muskets or matchlocks. The plan of the building seems good for defence, and its position admirably chosen on a rising ground, in the point of convergence of three fertile valleys well cultivated and thickly planted with date groves. It was said, this was one of the castles that defended the market road to *Hadramaut*, where are many others of a similar description. The road still passes under its dilapidated walls. From hence to *Gossyrh* is about five or six miles.

*April 1st, 1835.*—In prosecuting the survey of the coast, we again heard of some inscriptions about 40 miles to the eastward of *Hammam*. Lieut. SANDERS, Mr. SMITH, and myself, with the concurrence of Captain HAINES, started off for the purpose of copying them, after having previously examined the ruins of *Hasan Mesánáh*, situated close to the beach, on a gentle insulated eminence. The foundation wall is now all that remains, the stones of which have evidently been hewn, and strongly cemented with mortar. Every thing around bears striking testimony of its antiquity. It has originally served for the protection of a village, the position of which

Inscriptions near Dis' on the South Coast of Arabia.

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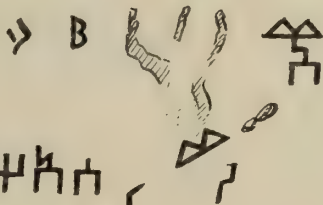
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